

Honda workers strike in China over wages

Abuse of woman worker sparks walkout



Reuters/Siu Chiu

Striking workers June 10 at Honda Lock factory in Zhongshan, China. They demanded higher wages and right to elect union representatives. Workers at two plants went on strike after workers at another Honda plant in Guangdong Province won 24 percent wage increases.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Honda Lock company agreed to a wage increase after more than 1,000 workers at its factory in Zhongshan, China, went on strike June 9. The workers, more than half of whom are women, are demanding higher wages and the right to elect their own union representatives.

This is the third strike in a week at Honda plants or subsidiaries in China. Workers at the Honda Auto Parts plant in the southeast coastal city of Foshan in Guangdong Province won a 24 percent pay hike after a strike that

ended June 2.

The strike at Japanese-owned Honda Lock, which makes locks, keys, and mirrors for Honda in Zhongshan, began after a woman worker was pushed to the ground by a security guard, according to the *New York Times*. She had criticized the guard for denying her entry to the plant, after he claimed her identity card was improperly attached to her shirt.

Chanting workers held a short protest march June 11 in spite of the presence of cops with riot shields. After

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Striking Spirit pilots demand wage parity with other airlines

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Pilots at Spirit Airlines walked off the job June 12 in the first strike at a U.S. passenger airline since 2005. The strike comes after three years of contract negotiations.

The 450 pilots, members of the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), say the company’s offer does not bring their wages up to par with similarly experienced pilots at other low-cost carriers like JetBlue. A first-year pilot at Spirit earns approximately \$34,600 compared to \$39,500 at JetBlue; first-year captains earn less than half what JetBlue captains take home.

Spirit Airlines has 150 daily flights and represents 20 percent of the airline traffic at the Ft. Lauderdale airport, including 41 percent of all international flights. It also has a significant presence in Atlantic City, New Jersey; Detroit; and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

The strike is being watched because

of ongoing negotiations with pilots at American Airlines and Air Tran. Last month pilots at Air Tran passed a strike authorization vote. They make slightly more on average than their counterparts at Spirit.

“None of the planes are moving and none of our pilots have crossed the picket line,” said Paul Hopkins, strike committee chairman of Spirit’s unit of ALPA. Spirit had said it would attempt to fly planes with management pilots and those who cross the picket line, but as of June 13 no flights have taken place.

Company CEO Ben Baldanza said in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* that “we would be open” to the White House convening a Presidential Emergency Board to break the strike and mandate a contract settlement. “We believe it would be in the public interest,” he said.

Spirit had the highest profit margin of any U.S. airline in 2009.

Actions to back Troy Davis set for June 22

BY CHERYL GOERTZ
AND RACHELE FRUIT

ATLANTA—A June 23 hearing for Troy Davis, a Black man framed up in 1991 for the killing of a white cop in Savannah, Georgia, is a registration of the success of the campaign for Davis’s freedom, which has won international support. Three times the state has tried to execute him; stays were won each time.

More than 50 supporters of Davis gathered at the First Iconium Baptist Church here June 8. The meeting, sponsored by Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, laid out plans for a Global Day of Solidarity for Troy Davis on June 22.

Davis has maintained his innocence throughout his 19 years on death row. No DNA or other physical evidence linked him to the killing. His conviction was based solely on the testimony of eyewitnesses, seven of whom have recanted or changed their testimony. Many say the police intimidated them into giving false statements.

“They asked me to describe the shooter and what he looked like and what he was wearing. I kept telling

Continued on page 3

New U.S. offensive in Kandahar is delayed

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Washington’s war in Afghanistan “will be tough to the end of the year, casualties will stay high and may go higher than they are now,” Gen. Stanley McChrystal announced in early June. The U.S. military offensive in Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan, slated to begin this month, will be delayed for several months, the U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan said.

McChrystal said this decision comes in light of the situation in neighboring Helmand Province, where U.S. Marines led NATO troops in a five-day offensive in February that seized control of Marjah and other districts held by the Taliban. At the time some Marine officers said they had achieved “catastrophic success,” but today they face opposition from many area residents, and Taliban forces have re-emerged.

The plan in Marjah, according to McChrystal, was to win “hearts and minds” of residents by delivering “government in a box.” In May, however, he told officers that Marjah has become “a bleeding ulcer.” The U.S.

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Nurses in Minnesota protest cutbacks in 1-day walkout

BY FRANK FORRESTAL
AND LEAH MORRISON

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Carrying picket signs saying, “Patients before Profits” and “Safe Staffing Now,” more than 12,000 union nurses walked off the job here June 10 in a one-day strike at 14 hospitals. Their central demand is a fixed nurse-to-patient ratio.

While walking the picket lines, Missy Larson and Andrea Siluk, both nurses at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, said the hospitals are demanding that nurses work faster with less help. Understaffing is a real problem, they emphasized.

Both were very angry at the hospital’s demand that nurses be “flexible.” Larson said, “This means that we would need to float from one department to another. Nursing today is highly specialized; we would not know how to provide proper care to a patient in another unit, such as the Intensive Care Unit.”

The striking nurses are members of the Minnesota Nurses Association, which is affiliated with National Nurses United (NNU). The union has adopted a goal of winning strict staff-

ing ratios in each local contract.

Nurses here overwhelmingly rejected the contract proposed by hospitals by 90 percent May 19. In addition to their demand for maximum “flexibility” in staffing, the hospitals are also demanding cuts in health benefits and pensions.

Eleven thousand members of the California Nurses Association, also affiliated to NNU, had planned a one-day strike over nurse-patient ratios, but a judge issued an injunction against it.

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S.F. meeting celebrates life of Catarino Garza

BY WENDY LYONS

SAN FRANCISCO—The political life of Catarino Garza, for many years a member and leader of the Socialist Workers Party, was celebrated at a meeting of more than 50 people at the party’s campaign hall here June 6. He died in May at the age of 81.

Events in working-class history that were part of Garza becoming a communist and his subsequent party activity were depicted in photos and news clippings on display at the meeting: the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, the postwar strike wave, anticolonial revolutions in the 1940s and ’50s, the Cuban Revolution, and Black liberation struggles.

The son of a Puerto Rican Taino (indigenous) mother, and a Mexican father, Garza grew up in the South Bronx in New York. His mother was a garment worker who also took in boarders; his father, a waiter and bartender.

Garza was a senior in high school in 1945 in New York when he attended a “welcome home” meeting of 800 people for party leaders, including leaders of the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes in the ’30s, who had just finished serving prison sentences, said Joel Britton, a member of the SWP in San Francisco, who chaired the meeting. They were framed up on “sedition” charges for opposing U.S. entry into the imperialist slaughter of World War II, he said.

The party was deeply involved in the class struggle at the time, with members working in fractions in auto, steel, and other industries. Party members helped Garza get a job as a sailor so he could

join the effort to build the party among industrial workers, Britton said.

Garza recalled later that although racist discrimination was against the policy of the National Maritime Union, which he belonged to, “race was a big issue” on the ships. He and other party members helped fight against discriminatory treatment of sailors who were Black.

Cuban Revolution

Betsey Stone, of the SWP in San Francisco, spoke about the contribution of cadres of Garza’s generation in helping the party take advantage of new openings for revolutionary activity that came with the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the mass proletarian battles that broke the back of Jim Crow segregation.

“Across the country, party members joined with others in building the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, sponsoring programs and building demonstrations in response to U.S. attacks on the revolution,” Stone said. In 1961 Garza ran for mayor of New York on the SWP ticket, campaigning in defense of Cuba.

When Fidel Castro came to New York to speak at the United Nations in September 1960, thousands of working people gathered at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem where the Cuban delegation was staying.

In a message to the meeting, Sherry Finer, a leader of the Young Socialist Alliance at the time, recalled how Garza was there, night after night, joining the discussions and helping to lead the party’s participation. “We sold countless copies of the *Militant* and of the *Young Socialist!*”



Militant/Eli Finer

Picket at United Nations, Dec. 4, 1964, protesting U.S.-Belgian intervention in Congo. At head of line is Catarino Garza, then Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from New York. Third in line is Clifton DeBerry, SWP presidential candidate.

This was also the year that students began to sit in to desegregate lunch counters in the South. Garza participated in the picket lines in New York outside Woolworth department stores in solidarity.

In April 1964, Garza chaired the first of three Militant Labor Forums in New York where Malcolm X spoke.

During the 1960s and ’70s, Garza was a leader of the party’s participation in the struggle of Puerto Ricans in the United States. He helped draft a resolution adopted at the 1976 convention. The resolution reaffirmed the party’s position, held since its founding in 1938, of support for independence for Puerto Rico. That document was later published in the book *Puerto Ricans in the U.S.: The Struggle for Freedom*.

After almost four decades of revolutionary activity, Garza resigned from the party in 1982. Although no longer active, he continued to support the party and contribute to it financially.

Bolshevik party

Ellie García, a member of the SWP in Los Angeles, told the meeting how studying a report by Garza to the 1977 party convention had a big impact on her learning what a Bolshevik party is. The report took up why separate caucuses or social affairs based on nationality have no place in a proletarian party.

As a new member in 1980, “I considered myself a Chicano nationalist,” García said. She explained that the re-

port given by Garza defended the right of women, Blacks, and others to organize separate committees in unions or organizations on campus. Building a revolutionary party required something different.

Quoting the report, she said, “Our party is not composed of caucuses or caucus-like formations struggling for their ‘rights’ in the party. We are a centralized combat party. . . . Party members must have confidence and mutual trust in each other if they are going to go into battle together.”

“I became attracted to the idea of building a disciplined, multinational party where you could be a leader of the party, not just a leader of a section of the party. Dealing with this question was a necessary step for me and others working in industry where the key question is uniting the working class—overcoming the divisions the ruling class fosters among workers so we can unite in combat.”

Members and friends of Garza’s family joined Socialist Workers, supporters, and others for food and refreshments before and after the program. Participants donated \$1,120 to build the party.

Publishing schedule

This is a two-week issue. We will resume publication with issue number 26, which will be mailed out Thursday, July 1.



Workers fight giveback demands

The ‘Militant’ reports on workers’ fights against givebacks demanded by the bosses on health care, wages, and working conditions, from Boeing workers in California to New York housing workers to coal miners in West Virginia. Don’t miss an issue!



Militant/Dan Fein

Workers at Co-op City in New York picketing against lockdown by company June 5.

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Georgia student pushes back deportation move

BY JANICE LYNN

ATLANTA—Jessica Colotl has not been deported because her sorority sisters “stood up for her, got attention for her case, and put pressure on authorities,” said Jerry Gonzalez, executive director of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials at a June 8 forum held at the Cobb County library.

Colotl, 21, a student at Kennesaw State University (KSU) in Georgia, was brought to the United States from Mexico when she was 10 years old. She was arrested in March on a charge of driving without a license after being stopped for a minor traffic violation on the KSU campus, and faced deportation when she was handed over to immigration authorities. Under Section 287(g) of U.S. immigration law police in some local jurisdictions are allowed to act as federal immigration agents.

A campaign by friends and members of her sorority, Lambda Theta Alpha, won Colotl release from a federal detention center in Alabama and deferment from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. This will allow her to remain in the United States legally for one year. Colotl was arrested a second time on charges of giving a false address to police and released on \$2,500 bond May 14. At the May 1 rally of 5,000 for immigrant rights here many demanded she not be deported.

More than 75 people attended the June 8 program sponsored by the Cobb United for Change Coalition and the Cobb Immigrant Alliance. “We have so much to learn from the African American struggle,” said An-

gela Flores, cofounder of the KSU Mexican American Student Organization. “When I was growing up here in Georgia, before there were many other Latinos, my sister who had a darker complexion was called the “N” word. I was told to go back to Mexico.”

Gonzalez noted there are many other ongoing deportation cases, including a man arrested May 25 in Hall County for fishing without a license. According to local press, 25-year-old Josue Castro did not provide a U.S.-issued identification and was subject to Section 287(g), now in use in four Georgia counties.

“Just because it is a law, doesn’t mean it is just. It must be eradicated. Our Latino brothers and sisters have just as much right to be here,” said Charles Muhammad, a Nation of Islam minister, in response to a question about the law.

“Hundreds of thousands marched May 1 demanding an end to raids and deportations,” said Jacob Perasso, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Georgia. “The fight for immigrant rights is not an issue only for immigrants. Winning legalization for all undocumented, which our campaign calls for, is a precondition to building a strong union movement in this country that can defend the working class against attacks on the standard of living and rights of all of us.”

In response to Colotl’s case, college presidents in Georgia were directed May 26 by Chancellor Erroll Davis to check the citizenship status of nearly 316,000 students by the time the fall semester begins.

Meanwhile, U.S. and NATO forces are increasing their troop presence in the area. By the end of August they will have about 23,000 soldiers in Kandahar, three times as many as a year ago. U.S. president Barack Obama had ordered 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan last December.

U.S. Afghanistan offensive

Continued from front page

government had plans to hire 10,000 Marjah residents for day-labor projects to clean irrigation canals, but as of early June only 1,200 people signed up, with many fearing retribution from the Taliban if they did so, reported the *Washington Post*. A plan to distribute 4,000 water pumps to farmers has also been scaled back by 75 percent.

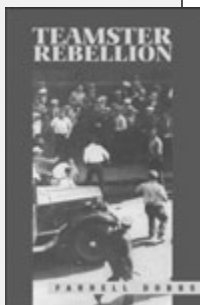
“The people have to want you to protect them,” McChrystal said in a statement about why Washington is not ready to proceed with the Kandahar operation. “It takes time to convince people.”

The number of U.S. “aid” workers increased to 110 from 8 last year, with 50 more on their way this summer, a U.S. official told the *New York Times*.

Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs

The 1934 strikes that built the industrial union movement in Minneapolis and helped pave the way for the CIO, as recounted by a central leader of that battle. —\$19



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Militant/Maceo Dixon

Protesters carried signs in Atlanta immigrant rights march May 1 demanding government stop trying to deport Jessica Colotl, a student at Kennesaw State University in Georgia.

Hearing set in Troy Davis case

Continued from front page

them that I didn’t know,” stated Antoine Williams in a sworn affidavit. “After the officers talked to me, they gave me a statement and told me to sign it. I signed it. I did not read it because I cannot read.”

Last August the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia to “make findings of fact as to whether evidence that could not have been obtained at the time of trial clearly establishes petitioner’s [Davis’s] innocence.” That is the purpose of the June 23 hearing.

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Anthony Scalia argued that the state can legally execute persons sentenced to

death who are later found to be innocent. “This Court has *never* held that the Constitution forbids the execution of a convicted defendant who has had a full and fair trial but is later able to convince a habeas court that he is ‘actually’ innocent,” Scalia wrote.

Solidarity activities in favor of freedom for Davis are planned for June 22 in both Atlanta and Savannah. The Atlanta event starts at 6:00 p.m. at the Georgia State Capitol. Amnesty International is organizing transportation from Atlanta to Savannah for the June 23 hearing, which is open to the public. Supporters who do not get into the courtroom will hold a vigil across the street. For more information: www.justicefortroy.org.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 5, 1985

PRICE, Utah—From June 21 to 23 women miners held one of their largest national conferences since they began meeting seven years ago. The event, held here at the College of Eastern Utah, was sponsored by the Coal Employment Project and the Coal Mining Women’s Support Teams.

Registered at the conference were 192 people, and 250 in all attended at least some part of it. The majority of miners were coal miners and members of the United Mine Workers of America.

A conference resolution extended sympathy to the families of those killed in the Wilberg mine fire and pledged that everyone would work with renewed determination to “defend our right to a safe workplace. . . . Another Wilberg, caused by the greed of the coal barons, must not happen.”



July 4, 1960

Answering a question at a socialist street corner election rally, June 21, the speaker, a Negro, said: “I’m speaking here because I believe everyone should be free, regardless of the color of his skin. My brothers in the South aren’t free, and neither am I here in New York.”

The accuracy of the statement was verified an hour and a half later when the speaker, Robert Franklin, his brother John Clarence Franklin, and Cornelius Suares Jr., were arrested a few blocks from where the rally was held in Greenwich Village on a trumped-up charge of “disorderly conduct.”

The three campaigners for the Socialist Workers party presidential ticket were accused of “using loud and boisterous language, collecting a crowd and refusing to move.”



July 6, 1935

As soon as Senator Wagner can get to Washington to participate personally in the ballyhoo connected with the attachment of Roosevelt’s signature, the much touted Wagner Labor Disputes Bill will have become law.

Under this bill a National Labor Relations Board is to be set up to “enforce” collective bargaining, etc. Thus the way is paved for eventual greater control of government over the unions.

Under a capitalist government the basic concern of these government agencies is never that of enforcing the rights of the workers, but that of maintaining “industrial peace,” in other words, preventing strikes or if they break out somehow, “settling” them, getting the workers back to work as quickly as possible.

Malcolm X: Youth and revolutionary struggles

The following is the 22nd in a series of excerpts the Militant is running from Pathfinder Press's latest book, Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power, by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. This selection is from the chapter "Malcolm X: Revolutionary Leader of the Working Class," based on a talk by Barnes in 1987. We encourage our readers to study, discuss, and help sell the book. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

Malcolm was committed politically to reaching out to young people. Without doing so, he understood, it was impossible to build a revolutionary movement. That was a lesson of every modern revolution.

"Our accent will be upon youth," Malcolm said in one of the first interviews he gave after breaking with the Nation of Islam. The youth, he said, "have less of a stake in this corrupt system and therefore can look at it more objectively, whereas the adults usually have a stake in this corrupt system and they lose their ability to look at it objectively because of their stake in it."

Malcolm was pointing to something the communist movement has long recognized, even if he used different language: that there is a material basis for the place of young people in revolutionary struggles. Youth are in a state of flux, with an entire lifetime ahead of them. For a relatively brief time, they are less tied down with families, financial pressures, mortgages, illnesses, disappointments, and other conservatizing encumbrances. They tend to respond more quickly and more easily to social and political ills all around them. As Lenin pointed out, even the class position of young people is not completely settled. Plus, on average, young people are stronger, more limber, more energetic, more fit for combat.

That's why, even while Malcolm was still in the Nation, he always sought out young audiences to speak to: on campuses, or to gatherings of young political militants. It's one of the reasons he

responded so readily to our request that he do an interview for the *Young Socialist* magazine in early 1965. I went back to Malcolm's office a few days later with the transcribed interview ready for him to edit and approve for publication. I told him I would be going to Algeria in a few months as part of a Young Socialist Alliance delegation to an international youth festival there. He responded immediately and enthusiastically. Malcolm was eager to put us in touch with young revolutionists he had met—he also called them "contacts"—during his trips to Africa and the Middle East and to make sure, among other things, that they got copies of the *Young Socialist* featuring the interview with him.

We had asked Malcolm during the interview, "What part in the world revolution are youth playing, and what lessons may this have for American youth?" I hadn't anticipated the first point he made. He started off by talking about the captives being taken by U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War. The majority of them are young people, he pointed out—"most are teenagers," but "some haven't yet reached their teens." Some-

Roots of the Korean fight for reunification

(First in a series)

BY SETH GALINSKY

Sixty-five years after Washington engineered the division of Korea at the end of World War II, that country is still split into North and South. The desire by working people for reunification is the driving force of politics on the Korean Peninsula today. Six and a half decades of separation have not been able to eliminate the struggle expressed in the slogan "Korea is one."

The partition of Korea "remains the most important and explosive unresolved national division imposed by the victors of World War II," notes Jack Barnes, Socialist Workers Party national secretary, in an article titled "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," published in issue 11 of *New International* magazine.

The SWP supports the determined fight by working people and youth on



Militant/Flax Hermes

San Francisco march against U.S. war in Vietnam, 1967. Young people are the ones who most quickly identify with "the necessity to eliminate the evil conditions that exist," Malcolm said. "When you get into a conversation on racism . . . young people are more incensed over it."

thing similar was true in the Congo, he added. That's why, when the imperialist troops "shoot captive revolutionaries," they often "shoot all the way down to seven years old."

In Vietnam, the Congo, and other countries on the frontlines of struggle, Malcolm said, "the young people are the ones who most quickly identify with the struggle and the necessity to eliminate the evil conditions that exist. And here

in this country, it has been my own observation that when you get into a conversation on racism and discrimination and segregation, you will find young people are more incensed over it—they feel more filled with an urge to eliminate it."

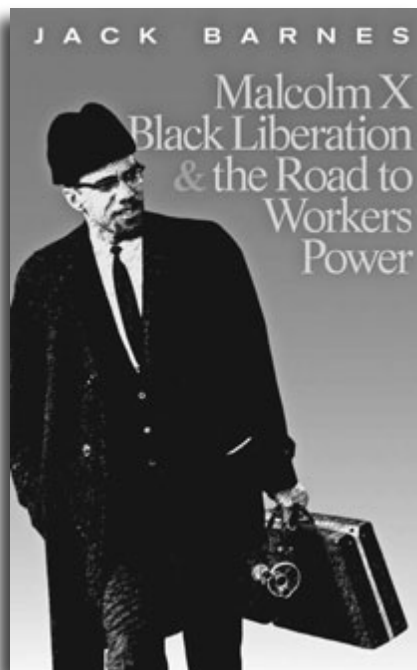
"Old people don't bring about a change," Malcolm had said at the OAAU's [Organization of Afro-Ameri-

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Special offer

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes



"This is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A book about the last century and a half of class struggle in the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution. . . ."

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both sides of the 38th parallel, Barnes said in a 2005 message to the Workers Party of Korea, for "the withdrawal of all imperialist armed forces from the seas surrounding Korea; for the removal of all U.S. troops from your country; and, in the process, for the restoration of a united and sovereign Korea."

Korean workers and peasants have a long record of resistance to foreign occupation and imperialist domination. In 1910 Korea became a formal Japanese colony. The Japanese colonial administration suppressed teaching the Korean language and Korean history in schools and denied the Korean people freedom of assembly, speech, and the press.

In 1919 an estimated 2 million people joined a wave of pro-independence demonstrations that swept Korea. The colonial authorities arrested 47,000 people and some 23,000 Koreans were killed or wounded. In the 1920s the Japanese secret police succeeded three times in infiltrating and destroying the communist party in Korea, which was helping to lead the fight against the occupation. Each time the party was reestablished.

Repression by the Japanese imperialists became even harsher in the '30s and '40s. All Koreans were forced to take Japanese names and instructed to practice the Japanese Shinto religion. Magazines and newspapers in the Korean language were banned. Hundreds of thousands of Koreans were drafted into the Japanese armed forces or to work for its war industry. Resistance, including a guerrilla movement, continued.

The Japanese occupation sped the industrialization of Korea and forged a growing working class; by 1942 some 24 percent of farmland and 80 percent of the forests were Japanese-owned.

People's Committees formed

The defeat of the Japanese army in World War II opened the road for a massive resurgence of the fight for Ko-

rean independence. Within two weeks of the Japanese surrender 145 People's Committees were functioning, many with participation from 16,000 political prisoners the colonial authorities were forced to release.

Japanese troops were disarmed, peasants began expropriating large landholdings of Japanese and Korean landlords, and workers committees controlled almost all the Japanese-owned factories in the country.

By Sept. 6, 1945, the People's Committees met in Seoul and formed a new government, the Korean People's Republic, led by Lyuh Woon Hyung.

But two days after the formation of the new government and in flagrant disregard for Korea's national sovereignty, U.S. troops landed in the south. This was part of an agreement with the Stalinist regime in Moscow to divide the country at the 38th parallel to "accept" the Japanese surrender and impose a "trusteeship" in Korea. Soviet troops were already in the north.

While Moscow recognized the Korean People's Republic, the U.S. Army Military Government declared itself the sole government in South Korea on October 10. It soon decreed that it would enforce the laws put in place by the hated Japanese occupiers. It dissolved the Congress of the People's Republic, arrested leaders of the People's Committees, banned strikes, and placed Japanese-owned factories that workers had occupied under military control.

"The population should unreservedly obey the orders issued over my signatures," decreed U.S. general Douglas MacArthur. "Those acting against the occupation or violating order and tranquility will be mercilessly and severely punished. For the period of military occupation, English is introduced as the official language."

In the North, meanwhile, a series of

Continued on page 6

'Imperialism is the arsonist setting fire to our forests'

Printed below is an excerpt from *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions*, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June*. The booklet contains five speeches by Thomas Sankara, who led the 1983–87 revolution in Burkina Faso. The speeches explain how the peasants and workers of this West African country established a popular revolutionary government and began to fight the hunger, illiteracy, and economic backwardness imposed by imperialist domination, and the oppression of women inherited from millennia of class society. The speech below, titled "Imperialism is the arsonist setting fire to our forests and savannah," was given by Sankara on Feb. 5, 1986, in Paris at the First International Tree and Forest Conference. Copyright © 2002 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY THOMAS SANKARA

My homeland, Burkina Faso, is without question one of the rare countries on this planet justified in calling itself and viewing itself as a distillation of all the natural evils from which mankind still suffers at the end of this twentieth century.

Eight million Burkinabè have pain-



Left, women in Kaona, Burkina Faso, terrace soil to control erosion, April 1986. Right, tree planting ceremony at peasants' rally in Pibaoré, 1987. "Colonial plunder has pillaged our forests without the slightest thought of replenishing them for our tomorrows," said Sankara.

fully internalized this reality for twenty-three years. They have watched their mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons die, with hunger, famine, disease, and ignorance decimating them by the hundreds. With tears in their eyes, they have watched ponds and rivers dry up. . . .

I have come to join with you in deploring the harshness of nature. But I have also come to denounce the ones whose selfishness is the source of his fellow man's misfortune. Colonial plunder has decimated our forests without the slightest thought of replenishing them for our tomorrows.

The unpunished disruption of the biosphere by savage and murderous forays on the land and in the air continues. One cannot say too much about the extent to which all these machines that spew fumes spread carnage. Those who have the technological means to find the culprits have no interest in doing so, and those who have an interest in doing so lack the technological means. They have only their intuition and their innermost conviction.

We are not against progress, but we do not want progress that is anarchic and criminally neglects the rights of others. We therefore wish to affirm that the battle against the encroachment of the desert is a battle to establish a balance

between man, nature, and society. As such it is a political battle above all, and not an act of fate.

The creation of a Ministry of Water as a complement to the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism in my country demonstrates our desire to clearly formulate the problems in order to be able to resolve them. We must fight to find the financial means to exploit our existing water resources—drilling operations, reservoirs, and dams. This is the place to denounce the one-sided contracts and draconian conditions imposed by banks and other financial institutions that doom our projects in this field. It is these prohibitive conditions that lead to our countries' traumatizing debt and eliminate any meaningful maneuvering room.

Neither fallacious Malthusian arguments—and I assert that Africa remains an underpopulated continent—nor the vacation resorts pompously and demagogically christened "reforestation operations" provide an answer. We and our misery are spurned like bald and mangy dogs whose lamentations and cries disturb the peace and quiet of the manufacturers and merchants of misery.

That is why Burkina has proposed and continues to propose that at least 1 percent of the colossal sums of money

sacrificed to the search for cohabitation with other stars and planets be used, by way of compensation, to finance projects to save trees and lives. We have not abandoned hope that a dialogue with the Martians might lead to the reconquest of Eden. But in the meantime, earthlings that we are, we also have the right to reject a choice limited simply to the alternatives of hell or purgatory.

Explained in this way, our struggle for the trees and forests is first and foremost a democratic and popular struggle. Because a handful of forestry engineers and experts getting themselves all worked up in a sterile and costly manner will never accomplish anything! Nor can the worked-up consciences of a multitude of forums and institutions—sincere and praiseworthy though they may be—make the Sahel green again, when we lack the funds to drill wells for drinking water a hundred meters deep, while money abounds to drill oil wells three thousand meters deep!

As Karl Marx said, those who live in a palace do not think about the same things, nor in the same way, as those who live in a hut. This struggle to defend the trees and forests is above all a struggle against imperialism. Because imperialism is the arsonist setting fire to our forests and our savannas.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

We rely on these revolutionary principles of struggle so that the green of abundance, joy, and happiness may take its rightful place. We believe in the power of the revolution to stop the death of our Faso and usher in a bright future for it. . . .

This fight can be waged. We must not retreat in face of the immensity of the task. We must not turn away from the suffering of others, for the spread of the desert no longer knows any borders.

We can win this struggle if we choose to be architects and not simply bees. It will be the victory of consciousness over instinct. The bee and the architect, yes! If the author of these lines will allow me, I will extend this twofold analogy to a threefold one: the bee, the architect, and the revolutionary architect.

Homeland or death, we will win!

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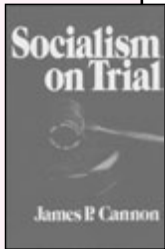
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Real face of health-care ‘reform’

Nurses in Minnesota have brought to public attention the real face of health-care “reform” in the United States. More than 12,000 walked off the job June 10 to protest the dangerous understaffing of nurses in hospitals that threatens patients’ lives. They are in a contract fight for a fixed ratio of nurses to patients and no cuts in health benefits and pensions.

While hospital corporations are loading more work on fewer employees President Barack Obama claims his health-care “reform” widens access to medical care. In reality, it perpetuates the deterioration in quality and availability of care for working people.

The scope of cuts to medical care is already devastating. Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami recently ended kidney dialysis treatment for 175 patients who cannot afford insurance. Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta shut down its dialysis clinic last October. Fifteen acute-care hospitals have closed in New Jersey since 1997. Since March 2009 at least three major hospitals have closed in New York City, laying off 6,000 workers.

As the worldwide economic depression unfolds, the capitalist class is driven to boost its profits by

speeding up production lines, cutting jobs, and reducing the social wage workers won in previous decades. This goes hand in hand with increasing restrictions on workers’ rights. When California nurses sought to join their Minnesota sisters and brothers in the June 10 strike, a judge issued an injunction against them.

All working people should support the nurses’ fight and oppose the cutbacks in health care. Under the capitalist market system all goods and services are commodities, produced to maximize the profits of the bosses, not to meet human needs.

The Cuban Revolution has demonstrated what can be done when workers take control of the wealth they produce. After the 1959 revolution, Cuban working people took political power out of the hands of the wealthy ruling families. The revolutionary government’s control over state property was used to provide health care, education, and other social needs to workers and farmers. Cuba sent doctors and nurses to provide medical assistance to many countries around the world in a show of international solidarity. Health care in Cuba is no longer a commodity, it’s a right.

Cuban performer welcomed in N.Y.

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK—Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez opened his first U.S. tour in 30 years at a sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall here June 4. He played to a second packed hall June 10.

Rodríguez is the best-known exponent of the *Nueva Trova* (New Song) movement from Cuba. For 15 years he was an elected representative in the National Assembly of People’s Power, the island’s legislature.

The Cuban troubadour applied many times for visas to play in the United States but was denied by Washington. Over the last two years, Washington has granted more visas to artists from Cuba, while maintaining a harsh economic embargo designed to undermine the revolution, which came to power in 1959.

Both nights at Carnegie Hall the singer was greeted by a standing ovation as soon as he took the stage. While Rodríguez performs songs on a wide variety of themes, many of them are inspired by the Cuban Revolution and by the fight of working people around the world against the ravages of capitalism. Throughout the concert, enthusiastic fans shouted out the names of songs they wanted to hear.

At both the June 4 and June 10 concerts, Rodríguez dedicated “Song of the Chosen One” to the Cuban Five, “whom we Cubans call our heroes.” The five Cuban revolutionaries—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—were in Florida gathering information on right-wing groups with a history of violent attacks against Cuba, with the complicity of the U.S. government. They have been in jail in the United States since 1998 on frame-up charges ranging from



Supporters of Cuban Revolution at New York’s Carnegie Hall where Silvio Rodríguez performed June 4 and 10.

“conspiracy to commit espionage” to “conspiracy to commit murder” in the case of Hernández.

A small number of right-wing demonstrators stood across the street during the first concert to protest against Rodríguez and the Cuban Revolution. A much larger group of supporters of the revolution and of lifting the U.S. embargo of Cuba demonstrated to welcome the Cuban artist and pass out literature in support of freeing the Cuban Five.

Rodríguez performs June 17 in Los Angeles and June 23 in Orlando, Florida.

Roots of Korean reunification fight

Continued from page 4

radical reforms in the interest of working people were being implemented at least as early as 1946, including a thoroughgoing land reform, expropriation of Japanese-owned property, punishment of Koreans who collaborated with the occupation, and laws guaranteeing formal equality for women.

One indication of the popularity of the revolutionary measures was that some 350,000 Koreans who had been living in Japan, many of them originally from the South, chose to return to the North.

In the South, U.S. forces and their landlord and capitalist allies were doing all they could to stamp out any resistance by workers and peasants there. They kept in power, or returned to positions of authority, Koreans who had collaborated with the Japanese occupation.

Mass protests against the occupation in almost every town and city in the South from September to November 1946 were brutally suppressed, in-

cluding a strike by railroad workers in September that grew into a general strike. By July 1947 there were more than 20,000 political prisoners in the South. After a National Security Law was enacted in 1948, 90,000 people were arrested.

In August 1948 Washington installed Syngman Rhee, already hated for unleashing a reign of terror against workers and peasants, as president of the Republic of Korea in the South. A month later revolutionary forces inaugurated the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north and named Kim Il Sung premier. From the very beginning the government in the north declared its determination to win reunification of the entire country.

In 1950 the clash between Koreans’ determination for reunification and U.S. imperialism’s drive to overturn the revolution in the North and quell the resistance in the South erupted in war. That will be the subject of the next article.

Strikes in China

Continued from front page

the cops left workers continued to block the road outside the factory for an hour.

Some press reports say that the Zhongshan workers are asking for the right to elect their own union representatives, which has been won in some other factories. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions is the only officially permitted union in China. It functions mostly as a government agency that enforces labor discipline and helps the bosses raise productivity.

According to the *Times*, Honda Lock workers have in effect already elected their own shop stewards to participate in negotiations with the company. A worker who insisted on anonymity told the paper, “The trade union is not representing our views; we want our own union that will represent us.”

China’s official Xinhua News Agency reported June 11 on an initial agreement to end the strike and grant a 100 yuan a month wage increase (US\$14.60), less than the 300 yuan workers had demanded. When many workers returned to work June 13, Xinhua said, they saw a want-ad posted promising to pay new workers 2,000 yuan a month, more than the 1,700 yuan returning strikers would get.

According to Xinhua, the workers demonstrated for more than three hours after seeing the want-ad. “They are telling us; if you do not resume work soon, the factory will employ new workers and replace you,” one worker said.

Honda Lock officials say that most strikers have returned to work.

Since 2008 the number of walkouts and strikes in China has risen sharply. In the last few weeks there have been strikes in a wide range of industries.

In early June striking workers at a Taiwanese-owned rubber factory clashed with police who tried to break up their protest in Kunshan City just outside Shanghai. Workers also walked out this month at a Japanese-owned plant that manufactures sewing machines in Xian and at a Taiwanese sporting goods factory in Jiangxi Province.

While many of the strikes have taken place at foreign-owned factories, bus and taxi drivers also went on strike earlier this year, affecting tens of thousands of people.

The Chinese government has tried to head off more strikes by encouraging local governments to raise the minimum wage. At least 14 provinces or regions have raised the minimum wage so far this year.

Malcolm X

Continued from page 4

can Unity] homecoming rally for him in late November 1964, after returning from the second Africa trip. That’s a lesson he had confirmed everywhere he traveled. But Malcolm was quick to make his point more precise: “I’m not saying this against anybody that’s old—because if you’re ready for some action you’re not old. I don’t care how old you are. But if you’re not ready for some action, I don’t care how young you are, you’re old. . . . [A]ny time you begin to sit on the fence, and your toes start shaking because you’re afraid too much action is going down, then you’re too old; you need to get on out of the way. Some of us get too old while we’re still in our teens.”

Malcolm’s words remind me of nothing so much as Jim Cannon’s call on the leadership and ranks of the Socialist Workers Party in October 1941 to begin carrying out a bolder policy in our trade union work. This was right on the eve of Washington’s entry into World War II and only weeks before he and seventeen other leaders of the SWP and of the Teamsters organizing drive in the Midwest were sentenced, railroaded to prison for their opposition to U.S. imperialist aims in that war. “I don’t know of anything more disgraceful for a young revolutionist than to get settled down and get so encumbered in a place that he cannot move,” Jim said. “It would be a damn good thing for him if he had a fire to blow away some property encumbrance and make him footloose and revolutionary again.”

That’s true for revolutionists of any age.